

SPECIAL FEATURES

Fragment of Camel-Hair Textile Found Embedded in Shroud Bloodstain

Thanks to Prof. Scavone of the University of Southern Indiana comes news of another potentially highly important finding by Dr. Leoncio Garza-Valdes. This concerns a hitherto unnoticed artefact found embedded in a Shroud sample.

When back in April 1988 Turin microanalyst Giovanni Riggi took the famous samples for carbon dating, for his own purposes he also removed with the aid of sticky tape a small sample of 'blood' from the occipital, or back of the head region on the Shroud. Embedded amidst this there has recently come to light a minute fragment of textile [see over], on which Dr. Garza-Valdes has made the following observations:

The minute textile fragment found amidst a blood-sample from the back-of the head region on the Shroud. According to Dr. Garza-Valdes, this is from a camel-hair head-band ...possibly a hairband remnant, [this] measures 0.23 mm in length and 0.16 mm. in width. The fibers, which are 5 micrometers in diameter, took the basic dye [a staining with the Wright's technique used for Dr. Garza-Valdes's analysis], even though encased in bioplastic. The band remnant has many lichenothelia microcolonies on both front and back. To the best of my knowledge, the only organic textile fibers with a diameter of 5 micrometers are camel hair in the Old World and llama hair in the New World.

Again we are confronted with a potentially fascinating discovery. An artefact of this kind, if we could be sure this really is from a camel-hair head-band, promises to re-establish the Shroud as that of someone crucified in a Near Eastern context. The ultimate possibility is that we have a piece of the very head-band worn by Jesus. But considerable more research is needed before a claim of this kind can be regarded with real confidence

New Insights on Margaret of Austria, who commissioned the Shroud casket destroyed in the Fire of 1532...

The British Library has recently published Jane Backhouse's *The Isabella Breviary* with useful further background on the early life of Margaret of Austria, who commissioned the expensive and beautiful silver casket for the Shroud, ruined beyond repair in the fire of 1532. Some details of Margaret's life were included in the Chronology of the Shroud 1452-1509 published in the last Newsletter.

The Isabella Breviary, which was written and illuminated in Bruges during the last decade of the 15th century, includes a charming portrait of the young Margaret (see above), painted to commemorate her marriage to the heir apparent of Spain, the Infante Juan, the only son of King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile by whose marriage Spain had become one country.

Daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian, in 1483 when only three Margaret had been formally married to the young Charles VIII of France, who had succeeded to the French throne that same summer. During her subsequent childhood she was treated as Queen of France, and brought up with a very good education at Amboise, only in 1491 to be repudiated by Charles in favour of Anne of Brittany, whose lands Charles wanted to incorporate into his own kingdom. Sent back to her native Flanders in 1493, two years later she and her brother were married by proxy to (respectively) the son and daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella. The Spanish fleet which brought the Spanish monarchs' daughter, Joanna (later to be known as 'mad Joanna') to Flanders returned with Margaret, briefly putting into Southampton due to bad weather. On 3 April (Palm Sunday) 1497 Margaret's marriage to the Infante Juan was properly solemnised in Burgos, Spain, but sadly Juan lived only six months before dying of a fever at Salamanca early that same October.

Even so Margaret had already become pregnant, but the child was still-born, thus ending any possibility of the newly-formed Spanish monarchy being continued through the male line. Even during this so tragically short marriage Margaret had greatly endeared herself to her royal in-laws and to the Spanish people and remained at the Spanish court for another two years before being up-rooted once more to marry young Shroud-owner Duke Philibert II of Savoy in 1501. At this point Margaret became co-owner of the Shroud with her husband. Sadly, this lyrically happy marriage lasted for only three years, cruelly terminated by Philibert's untimely death in 1504. But although Margaret went on to a distinguished political career as regent in the Netherlands, she seems to have sustained an interest in the Shroud for the rest of her life, hence her commissioning of the casket, also, probably, the so-called 'Dürer' copy of the Shroud in the Church of St. Gommaire, Lierre, Belgium.

[Editor's note: While preparing the last Newsletter I was at somewhat of a loss to remember how I had come across the Shroud-like image of 1486 from the *Très Riches Heures* manuscript. Thankfully BSTS member Isolde Wigram of Lingfield, Surrey, has come to the rescue. She points out that it was she who alerted Dr. Michael Clift to the manuscript illumination in 1992, and Dr. Clift duly passed the information on to me - though it took a while to surface! Such 'leads' from members are always most welcome, and we are most grateful to Miss Wigram for this particular contribution to Shroud studies.]